

# Duke Favored in Familiar League

The Blue Devil women and the other eight teams in the ACC all return at least three starters from a year ago.

By Mike Ogle  
Assistant Sports Editor

Not much has changed around the ACC women's basketball landscape since March.

Duke and Virginia are still the teams to beat.

Florida State and Wake Forest are still the teams to get beat.

All nine teams return at least three starters, including the 2000 player of the year in the Blue Devils' Georgia Schweitzer.

Schweitzer, the preseason pick to repeat as the league's top performer, averaged 15.6 points and 4.0 rebounds while shooting .403 behind the 3-point stripe last season.

She'll pair with Rochelle Parent in a frontcourt that lost Peppi Brown, a first-team All-ACC member, to lead conference tournament champion Duke (28-6, 12-4 in the ACC). The media's preseason choice to win the conference picked up Alana Beard, a 5-foot-11 guard/forward tabbed as the preseason rookie of the year.

"I think we never feel any more pressure from outside sources than we do from within ourselves because we have such high expectations ourselves," Duke coach Gail Goestenkors said.

"Two years ago we were ranked in the top 5 in the country in the preseason polls, and we learned the hard way that



DTH/KATHERINE EAKER

Virginia sophomore Schuye LaRue (center) was the ACC Rookie of the Year last season as the Cavaliers won the league's regular-season title.

preseason polls don't really mean a whole lot."

Virginia (25-9, 13-3) proved that notion last year as a bit of a surprise regular-season champion that earned Debbie Ryan her seventh ACC Coach of the Year honor.

The Cavaliers return a formidable trio in Schuye LaRue, Svetlana Volnaya and Telisha Quarles. LaRue, the 2000 ACC Rookie of the Year, led the team with 14.4 points and 8.0 rebounds per game. Volnaya (13.8 ppg, 8.0 rpg) was a

first-team all-ACC performer, and Quarles was the team's third-leading scorer at 12.4 points per contest.

"Obviously we have a great trio of players returning in the starting lineup," Ryan said. "Players who have a lot of experience, are very, very talented and obviously are going to anchor our team this year."

"So that's a very big bright spot for us."

The bright spot for third-place N.C. State (20-9, 11-5) last season was its now-

departed 6-6 center, Summer Erb. Now the Wolfpack has to find a way to smoke teams without Erb.

N.C. State faltered when she went down with a broken left foot late in the season. The Wolfpack went 3-4 without her and lost its first game of the NCAA tournament when she returned in a limited capacity.

But the rest of the team still returns, including sophomore forward/center Kaayla Chones (11.4 ppg, 7.9 rpg) and senior guard Tynasha Lewis (11.0 ppg, 5.1 rpg).

Clemson's player to watch is sophomore guard Chrissy Floyd.

The second-team All-ACC member came off the bench to lead the Tigers in scoring as a freshman at 12.1 ppg. The team's second-leading scorer (9.2) and leading rebounder (7.4), Erin Bath, also returns.

Like Clemson, Georgia Tech also has a sizzlin' sophomore in Niesha Butler, who had to decline the lead in Spike Lee's "Love and Basketball" because of NCAA rules.

Butler, the 1999 ACC Rookie of the Year, redshirted last season after tearing her anterior cruciate ligament in the fourth game of the year. She joins four returning starters for the Yellow Jackets (17-14, 7-9).

Maryland (16-15, 5-11), Florida State (12-17, 4-12) and Wake Forest (7-21, 3-13) comprise the bottom third of the conference.

"Athletically, I know we're moving in the right direction," Demon Deacon coach Charlene Curtis said. "How close? None of the other teams seem to want to slow down and wait for us to catch up."

# Freshmen Aim to Learn Roles on Tar Heel Team

By Rachel Carter  
Assistant Sports Editor

Chrystal Baptist didn't draw a easy assignment during the first days of North Carolina's basketball practice.

The 6-foot-2 freshman forward had to go up against her roommate, All-ACC forward LaQuanda Barksdale, who led the league in scoring and rebounding last year.

"That's the toughest thing in the world. It is so hard," Baptist said. "And she doesn't go easy on me. We're roommates and you know, she teaches me things, but at the same time, when we step on that court, she's pushing me, shoving me, holding my jersey preparing me for what's going to happen in a game."

Baptist's trial by fire into collegiate basketball is something all of North Carolina's freshmen are experiencing right now to prepare for the season.

Baptist, guard Joy Hairston, forward/center Carrie Davis and center Candace Sutton are North Carolina's newcomers and should jump into the action quickly.

Sutton will probably be the biggest impact on the team. At 6-6, her height has helped her edge junior LaShonda Allen for the starting slot. Sutton will also be called upon to give the Tar Heels a big inside presence.

"Candace is going to be great inside. It's unbelievable. She's huge, she's got incredible movement ..."

A former Maryland high school player of the year, Sutton said she intends to be the ACC Rookie of the Year.

"I think that I have the potential to do that, and I know that playing with a great team under a great coaching staff that Carolina has, I have the opportunity to go out and work hard and be rookie of the year," Sutton said.

For the other three freshmen, learning how to be effective when coming off the bench will be their main focus.

"It's going to be a learning year for me, I think, more so than a playing year," Hairston said. "I'll probably get some playing time during the year, but I understand I have to get the offense down and understand what the coaches are wanting me to do here."

Hairston is playing behind Coretta Brown and Cherie Lea at point guard and could also see time backing up Juana Brown at the 2-guard spot.

Baptist sees more of an active role for herself than Hairston. She's playing power forward behind Barksdale and Jennifer Thomas but could compete for time. UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell calls Baptist "the complete package."

"Right now, (my goal is) to be a big threat of the bench," Baptist said. "Hopefully when they take (Barksdale) out of the game, they won't even notice that they're taking out an All-American."

As for Davis, the 6-4 freshman from Franklin, Tenn., might face the hardest fight for playing time of all the freshmen.

Davis will have to battle Sutton, Allen and senior Jackie Myers for minutes. She said

her role for the team right now would be to help her teammates improve their post play during practice.

Thomas said the height of the freshmen should help the Tar Heels in the post. Hairston is the shortest of the freshmen at 6-0.

"They're really good," Thomas said. "I've known Carrie since I was like 12 from going to camps and stuff. We used to play against her AAU team all the time, so she's a great player."

Although Sutton will have the chance to shine brightest early in the season, the Tar Heels have carved out a special spot for all of their freshmen.

Said Hatchell, "They're going to make us better and give us some good depth."

# Thomas Looks to Show Off Post Moves

By Kelly Lusk  
Staff Writer

Sophomore Jennifer Thomas is the protegee of a football player.

But she plays for the North Carolina women's basketball team. Thomas, a forward, credits many of her post moves to her dad, who played football at Ohio State.

"He used to tell me that nobody could ever stop him in the post, so he kind of taught me a lot of post moves," Thomas said.

She also picked up some tips from Lydia Johnson, the aunt of NBA player Robert "Tractor" Traylor. Thomas occasionally worked out with Johnson when she was younger.

Her favorite post move is the "Moses Malone."

"It's not really up and under," Thomas said. "It's like a fake to the middle and turn back baseline for the layup."

Thomas may have more opportunities to show off her favorite move this season because former UNC player Jackie Higgins left the team to pursue a

professional career overseas. Higgins, who started 13 games, was often the Tar Heels' first player off the bench.

Thomas had a rocky start last year. She had difficulty meeting the team conditioning standards and sat out the first three games until she passed the requirements. This year, she has yet to pass the test, but she said it's not going to be like last year.

"I'm getting there, but they moved my time up," Thomas said. "I have to make (the mile) in 6:45 now, so I'm working on it. It's going to get there, though."

With a year of experience under her belt, Thomas said she feels more comfortable at practice and on the court.

"Practice altogether is a lot easier



Sophomore forward Jennifer Thomas learned moves from her father and the aunt of NBA player Robert Traylor.

now that I know what to expect," Thomas said. "I know the drills now. I know what to do, and I can help the freshman and teach them what to do."

Thomas appeared in UNC's final 30 games after she passed the team's physical tests, and she made the most of her time on the court. She averaged 6.0 points per game in 13.0 minutes of playing time. Thomas scored a season-high 18 points against Richmond and earned ACC rookie of the week honors twice.

Thomas did all this against women who were often a few inches taller. Thomas stands at 6-foot-1 and must battle women bigger than her for the ball. This summer, she focused on her footwork and rebounding so that her height won't hinder her on the court.

With a year's experience, Thomas also can help the freshmen learn how to deal with the rigors of college hoops.

"We know what it takes," Thomas said. "We had a lot of adversity that we went through last year, so now we won't really be surprised for anything. It's going to be rough, but we all want to do it."

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# Chambers Ready for Return

By Roland Hoffman  
Staff Writer

Spending a season sitting on the bench can sometimes be beneficial for an athlete.

That certainly was the case for Courtney Chambers.

The redshirt freshman spent last year watching her teammates play while she battled mononucleosis. The time off allowed her to gain valuable experience, but at the same time it pained her to know that she couldn't contribute.

"It was real tough sitting on the sidelines," Chambers said. "It's usually tough for freshmen anyway, but it was especially hard for me to watch the team, knowing that I couldn't play."

Chambers played in her last game Dec. 19 against Michigan State before being diagnosed with mono and then receiving her medical redshirt. She remained inactive until February, when she was able to practice with the team.

Now Chambers is ready to show that she can make a positive contribution for the Tar Heels as an outside shooting

threat. Her left-handed jumper will allow Chambers to play at shooting guard and small forward.

Along with a year of watching, Chambers also has genetics on her side. Her father, William, played at UNC under Dean Smith from 1968 to 1972.

Although Chambers did see action in six games last season, the most important part of the year was being able to attend practices and learn the Tar Heels' system. This should make her transition from the bench to the floor much smoother.

"I feel real comfortable being able to step in this year," Chambers said. "Having that year of practicing with the team, I know that this is a good team. I just want to step in and contribute."



Redshirt freshman Courtney Chambers played in six games before suffering from mononucleosis.

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